

It's midnight for 'Express'

For the past several years, most of the big-name attractions in pro wrestling have worked exclusively for one of the major promotions. So despite the wishes of fans, inter-federation matches remain a dream.



GRUNT AND GRIN

BY DAVE MELTZER
FOR THE NATIONAL

Two months back, however, the National Wrestling Alliance gave the okay, because of special circumstances, for an exception. An independent wrestling show was arranged, with the entire gate going to help pay medical expenses for 20-year-old Tom Robinson, a longtime fan who suffered what was believed to be a stroke last spring just before he was about to make his debut as a wrestling manager. Robinson had traveled around the country to see wrestling events and had become friendly with several wrestling figures, in particular manager Jim Cornette and the Midnight Express (the tag team of Bobby Eaton and Stan Lane).

The NWA gave Cornette and the Express permission to work the show, which takes place Friday night at Monsignor Bonner High School in the Philadelphia suburb of Drexel Hill, Pa. But events last week have increased the significance of the event.

After a backstage argument with management, Cornette and Lane quit the NWA, for reasons unrelated to the show. Eaton decided to stay with the promotion. So the tag team of the year in 1987-88 — and a strong candidate for such honors this year — will be no more after Friday.

The Express's final match — at least for now — will be against Cactus Jack and Terry Funk. Many hardcore wrestling fans are traveling from around the country to this seemingly insignificant show because it will be the first time Funk, one of pro wrestling's alltime greats, has been in the same ring with Eaton, generally considered one of the three best active in-ring performers in the country.

The two tag teams and Cornette will be performing without compensation, as will the two leading wrestlers from the Memphis-based United States Wrestling Association, Jerry (The King) Lawler and Eddie (Hot Stuff) Gilbert.

ETC: The NWA/WWF wrestling war may spread to Japan in March. New Japan Pro Wrestling is negotiating to put together a joint show with the NWA on March 21 at the 60,000 seat Tokyo Egg Dome. Another Japanese promotion, Super World Sports, would like to put on a show combined with the WWF in the same building on March 28. . . . NWA will bring in tag teams from several countries, including legitimate Soviet wrestlers, for its Dec. 16 pay-per-view show from Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis. This will mark the first time legitimate Soviet wrestlers have worked in the U.S. Using bogus Soviets as villains has been a time-honored tradition in wrestling. . . . Next WWF pay-per-view is Thanksgiving night, the annual Survivor Series from Hartford, Conn. Main event is Hulk Hogan & Jim Duggan & Tugboat & Big Bossman vs. Haku & The Barbarian & Dino Bravo & The Earthquake..

The Grunt and Grin column appears every Tuesday.

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